



WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Fact Sheet # 77A: Prohibiting Retaliation Under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)

December 2011

This fact sheet provides general information concerning the FLSA's prohibition of retaliating against any employee who has filed a complaint or cooperated in an investigation.

The Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor administers and enforces the FLSA, the federal law of most general application concerning wages and hours of work. All covered nonexempt employees must be paid not less than the current federal minimum wage for all hours worked and overtime pay, at time and one half the regular rate, for all hours worked over 40 in a workweek. The Wage and Hour Division investigates FLSA violations through its complaint-based and directed investigation programs.

Prohibitions

Section 15(a)(3) of the FLSA states that it is a violation for *any person* to **“discharge or in any other manner discriminate against any employee because such employee has filed any complaint or instituted or caused to be instituted any proceeding under or related to this Act, or has testified or is about to testify in any such proceeding, or has served or is about to serve on an industry committee.”**

Employees are protected regardless of whether the complaint is made *orally* or *in writing*. Complaints made to the Wage and Hour Division are protected, and **most courts have ruled that internal complaints to an employer are also protected.**

Coverage

Because section 15(a)(3) prohibits “any person” from retaliating against “any employee”, the protection applies to all employees of an employer even in those instances in which the employee’s work and the employer are not covered by the FLSA.

For additional information on FLSA Coverage, please visit Fact Sheet 14 at <http://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/14-flsa-coverage>.

Section 15(a)(3) also applies in situations where there is no current employment relationship between the parties; for example, it protects an employee from retaliation by a former employer.

Enforcement

Any **employee** who is **“discharged or in any other manner discriminated against”** because, for instance, he or she has filed a complaint or cooperated in an investigation, may file a retaliation complaint with the Wage and Hour Division or may file a private cause of action seeking appropriate remedies including, but not limited to, employment, reinstatement, lost wages and an additional equal amount as liquidated damages.

Where to Obtain Additional Information

For additional information, visit our Wage and Hour Division Website: <http://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd> and/or call our toll-free information and helpline, available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in your time zone, 1-866-4USWAGE (1-866-487-9243).



This publication is for general information and is not to be considered in the same light as official statements of position contained in the regulations.

The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.